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LETTER DATED 24 FEBRUARY 1994 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit to you a text of the statement dated 15 February 1994 of the Republic of Georgia State Committee for Investigation and Revelation of Materials concerning the Policy of Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing against the Georgian Population in Abkhazia, and Submission of Such Materials to an International Tribunal.

May I ask for your kind assistance in circulating this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter P. CHKHEIDZE
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement dated 15 February 1994 of the Republic of Georgia State Committee for Investigation and Revelation of Materials concerning the Policy of Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing against the Georgian Population in Abkhazia, and Submission of Such Materials to an International Tribunal

For a year and a half, the Abkhazian region of the Republic of Georgia has become an area of some of the most tragic events of the end of the twentieth century.

Fascist separatists, attempting to infringe upon the territorial integrity of Georgia, instigated an armed conflict which was sustained through substantial foreign support. Having temporarily achieved a military victory in the region, the separatists began to conduct an operation aimed at the elimination of the Georgian population in Abkhazia and violating elementary norms of international humanitarian law by their practice of genocide and ethnic cleansing. World opinion has not however reflected a proper evaluation of these facts.

The special State Committee has been established to gather the material to prove that a continuing policy of genocide and ethnic cleansing is being pursued in Abkhazia.

The fact-finding process is under way. A tremendous amount of work has been done by this special investigative body in the General Procurator's office, whose criminal investigation into the practice of genocide and ethnic cleansing towards the Georgian population in Abkhazia is now in progress. According to material gathered, it is proved that the Abkhaz separatists and their accomplices premeditated the genocide of the Georgian population.

There is compelling evidence of a conspiracy between the organizers and executors of these heinous crimes and their accomplices, whose ultimate goals were the violation of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia and the mass murder of thousands of innocent people consigned to this horrible fate by simple virtue of their Georgian ethnic origin.

Despite compelling evidence to the contrary, certain parties persist in denying the occurrence of genocide in Abkhazia, and vainly attribute these events to the "usual cruelties of war". Such an assessment of this particular issue constitutes nothing more than an attempt to defraud the international community.

There is significant evidence that the preparation for an episode of ethnic cleansing in Abkhazia has been under way for many years. The Abkhaz mass media, scientific journals, etc., have consistently blamed Georgians for an alleged artificial reduction of the indigenous Abkhaz population. It became starkly obvious that the Georgian population was destined for elimination. And who would fill the tremendous vacuum created by the expulsion of a population numbering well over 200,000? The answer came during the conflict when Mr. B. Ardzinba and his co-conspirators loudly proclaimed the invitation to

people of North Caucasia and Near Eastern countries to come and fight against the Georgians, with the promise of "housing and citizenship" as a reward.

This insidious plot has resulted in the flight of literally hundreds of thousands of Georgians, forcibly driven from their homes and subjected to indescribable physical and mental punishment, overt violation of personal dignity, destruction of homes and property, stolen cattle and vehicles, etc. The treatment inflicted upon the Georgian population rendered it impossible for them to remain in Abkhazia without ultimately being annihilated.

The current investigation will present irrefutable evidence to all interested parties that premeditated ethnic cleansing took place in Abkhazia.

Almost immediately after the fall of Sukhumi on 27 September 1993, military engagement between the opposing forces ceased. The investigation has nevertheless ascertained the continuation of mass extermination of non-combatants after the closure of military operations, and possesses proof to this effect.

There is conclusive evidence of continuing cynical and beastly crimes against a peaceful population, which commonly include the rape of women and their further malicious wounding inflicted by carving the breasts of those who survive. It would be damning enough if the indictment were to stop here, but it must be known that this particular aforementioned brutality is inflicted not only on grown women, but on children who have not even reached adolescence. The gruesome trophies of these shameful deeds are the nipples of the victims collected in matchboxes by the perpetrators of these unspeakable crimes. Greek, Armenian, Russian and voices of other national origin rise in concert with Georgian in testimony to these events, and I accept full responsibility for this declaration of the facts.

In order to facilitate world awareness of the objectives of the Abkhaz fascists and the true picture of the tragedy that has resulted from their actions, it is necessary to draw the immediate attention of international organizations to these facts in the fullness of their atrocity.

According to the testimonies of numerous witnesses, after an innocent person is murdered, the following inscription is carved into the flesh of his body, "Do not eat so much, Georgians, do not get fat. It is not easy to drag your corpses".

It is impossible to read unemotionally the testimony of witnesses regarding the torture of Georgians who remained in Sukhumi after its fall to the Abkhaz separatists.

Hear the story of Nugzar Jimsheleishvili, the former engineer of the Council of Ministers. His father, Variam Jimsheleishvili, was taken captive. His house was destroyed, and both his grandmother, Babutsa Pipia, and his mother-in-law, Mzia Kalandla, were tortured and afterwards murdered.

Hear the story of a helpless 80-year-old man, L. B. (I use only initials out of reasonable considerations), who was brutally killed, and afterwards

buried by one of his students. The student, who was of Russian origin, met the same fate simply because he had given the old man a decent burial.

Hear of 60-year-old V. Monia, who was found hiding in his neighbour's house and murdered.

It is impossible to enumerate within the space of this document the tragic fates of M. Mirtskvlava, Mr. and Mrs. V. Kvaratskhelia, V. Argobliani, A. Gadelia, T. Gegechkori, U. Kvaratskhelia, D. Dgebuadze, S. Kakuberi and T. Kakuberi-Gvakharia, all Georgians, all neighbours on the same Tsereteli Street who unfortunately remained in Sukhumi after its fall, and now lay dead - who knows where?

And what about other Georgian residents of Sukhumi - D. Darchemelia, the brothers Zakradze, S. Kacharava, E. and Z. Abramia, F. Kalandia, T. Sharia, V. Kvachakhia, A. Kintsurashvili, D. Kopeliani, M. Kvirchkhaia?

Each unembodied name represents a human being who found himself at the mercy of a late twentieth century resurgence of fascism, and found it no more merciful than at any other time in history.

According to the evidence gathered by the investigation, official representatives of the Government of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic were targeted for execution individually and in groups. It must be stressed that there are many documented incidents of this.

The account of the murder of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Abkhazia, Mr. Jiuly Shartava, and of his personal staff, is a case in point. According to the evidence gathered by the investigation, it has been established that Mr. Shartava and his staff were taken captive in Sukhumi and subjected to special brutality. A coroner's examination has proven that they were horribly tortured prior to their execution.

Shartava's murder and that of many other employees of the Cabinet of Ministers of Abkhazia was sanctioned by the same group, which provoked the military assault against the State of Georgia and its citizens.

Even during the process of the Geneva negotiations, the policy of genocide and ethnic cleansing has been relentlessly pursued. While the purpose of these negotiations is to achieve an acceptable peaceful settlement of the conflict, to the Abkhaz side they have been nothing more than a smokescreen behind which to hide the continuation of their barbaric policy. Instead of yielding to the peace process, they continue to cultivate a climate of horror so as to prevent the safe return of the displaced persons and refugees to their homes. This is proven by the most recent events in the Gali region of Abkhazia.

On 2 and 3 February 1994, Abkhaz forces used heavy artillery and tanks to mount an attack against villages in the Gali region. During the next 10 days, all of the buildings of Okumi, Mukhumi, Tsarche, Pirveli, Gali, Rechkhi, Tskhiri, Gumprish, Constitutsia, Kohora and other villages were burned to the ground. According to our information, a sophisticated artillery system, "Grad", was used, as well as poisonous gas in the village of Gumurishi. More than 800

houses were destroyed and hundreds of hostages have been taken. The killing and terrorization of the civilian population drove people from their villages to hide in the mountains. Thousands of women, children and elderly folk attempted to escape the terror by way of snow-covered passages, leaving behind mothers frozen with their babies in their arms, and old men and women unable to withstand the cruel conditions, both natural and man-made.

More than 2,000 devastated people managed to escape death and gain asylum in Zugdidi, Tsalenjikha, and other towns of western Georgia, many of whom are hospitalized with frozen hands and feet.

We are witnessing a classic policy of ethnic cleansing, which is a form of genocide.

It should be mentioned that the Gudautian separatists refused to permit the United Nations observers based in Sukhumi to visit the area where the repressive actions were taking place.

Are these effronteries not an overt challenge to United Nations peacemaking efforts - nay, to the entire civilized world?

During the course of this investigation the personalities of those people who, under the mantle of the Abkhaz separatists, commit genocide against a peaceful population are being clearly revealed. The evidence gathered testifies that the tragedy in Abkhazia is a crime against humanity.

(Signed) Prof. Levan ALEKSIDZE
Chairman of the Committee